

REMARKS

Claims 1-6 and 9 are presented for consideration, with Claims 1, 4, 6 and 9 being independent.

Editorial changes have been made to selected claims. In addition, Claim 9 has been added to provide an additional scope of protection.

INFORMATION DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

In compliance with the duty of disclosure under 37 C.F.R. § 1.56 and in accordance with the practice under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.97 and 1.98, the Examiner's attention is directed to the documents listed on the enclosed Form PTO-1449. Copies of the listed Japanese documents are also enclosed.

The concise explanations of relevance for the non-English documents are provided by their accompanying English-language abstracts. Additionally, Japanese Document No. 11-136706 is discussed in the Background Art section of the specification.

For the Examiner's information, U.S. Patents No. 6,972,734 and No. 7,056,216 corresponds to Japanese Document No. 2000-353248, U.S. Patent No. 6,683,607 corresponds to Japanese Document No. 2001-60275, and U.S. Patent No. 6,522,312 corresponds to Japanese Document No. 11-136706.

For the Examiner's additional information, attached is a copy of the PCT Notification of Transmittal of The International Search Report and Written Opinion issued in connection with Applicants' corresponding PCT application.

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Docket No.: 00862.109670

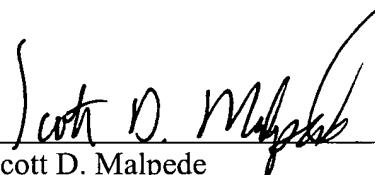
It is respectfully requested that the above information be considered by the Examiner and that an initialed copy of the enclosed Form PTO-1449 be returned indicating that such information has been considered.

CONCLUSION

Due consideration and prompt passage to issue are respectfully requested.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,



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